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NO. 35
MARCH



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THE VAULT OF

HORROR[®]

FEATURING...



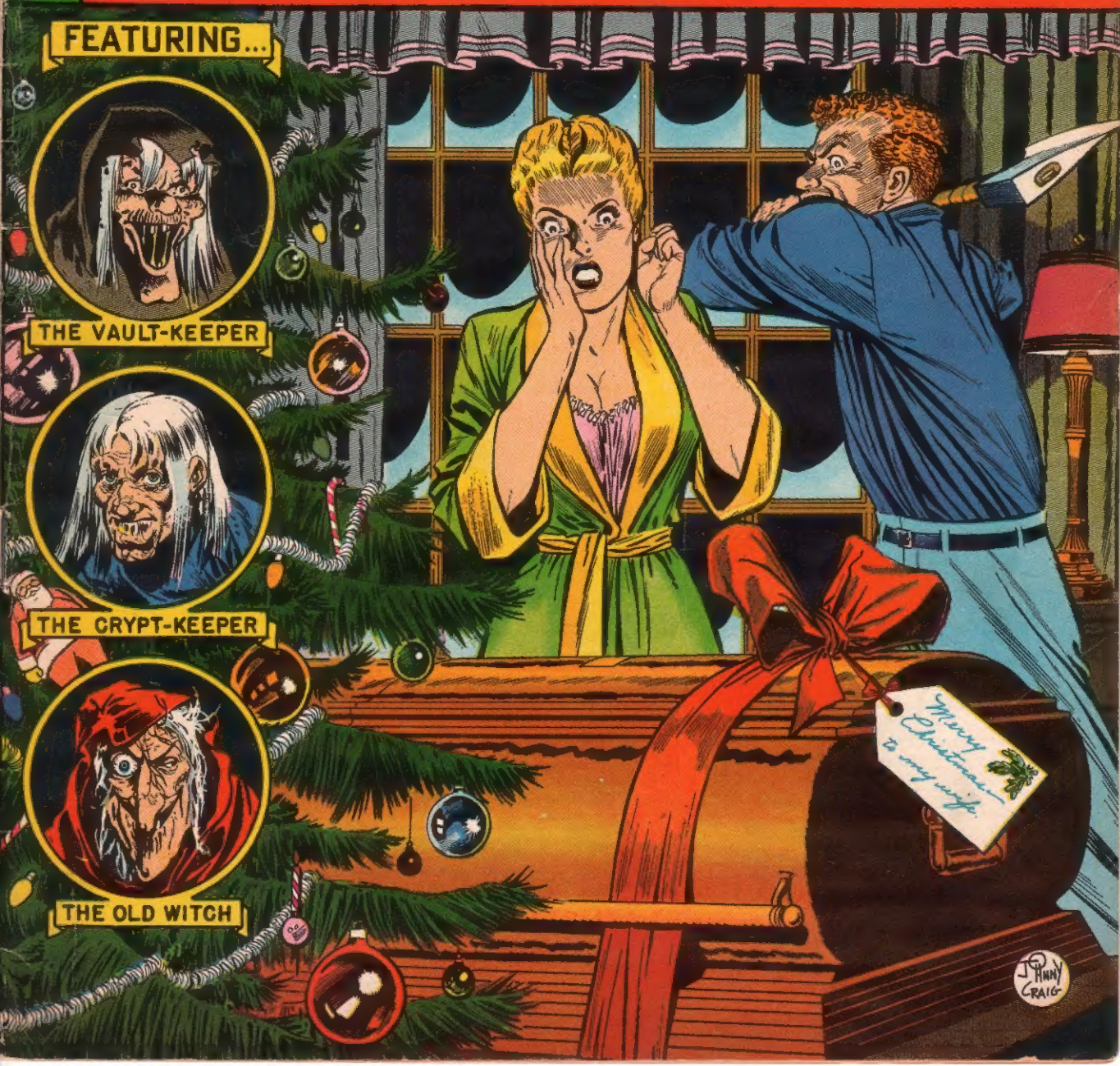
THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



JOHN
CRAIG



SO WHAT? SO YOU, TOO, CAN JOIN THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!

FOR AN **INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP**, FILL OUT THE **COUPON** AND SEND IT IN, TOGETHER WITH **25¢**. IF **FIVE OR MORE** OF YOU WISH TO JOIN AS AN **AUTHORIZED CHAPTER**, ENCLOSE **EACH MEMBER'S NAME AND ADDRESS**, ALONG WITH **25¢ FOR EACH NAME**, AND INDICATE THE **NAME OF THE ELECTED CHAPTER PRESIDENT**. WE WILL NOTIFY EACH PRESIDENT OF HIS **CHAPTER NUMBER**. **EVERY MEMBER, CHAPTER OR INDIVIDUAL**, WILL RECEIVE HIS KIT **DIRECTLY... BY RETURN MAIL**.

THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB
ROOM 706
225 LAFAYETTE STREET
NEW YORK 12, N.Y.

SO, ALL RIGHT! SO HERE'S MY TWO BITS. SO MAKE ME A MEMBER, ALREADY, AND SEND ME THE THINGS AND STUFF LIKE WHAT THE KID UP THERE GOT... SO!

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY ZONE NO.

STATE

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THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HO, HO, HO! AND WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS? HAVE YOU BEEN A GHOUL LITTLE CHILD? I HOPE SO, FOR WITH THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT ALL ABOUT US, THE EDITORS THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FITTING TO GIVE OUR STORY FOR THIS ISSUE A LITTLE CHRISTMASY FEELING! IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE! AND ALL GOOD LITTLE CHILDREN ARE TUCKED IN THEIR BEDDY-BYES FAST ASLEEP! HO! HO! A PERFECT ATMOSPHERE FOR A CHRISTMAS TALE, EH?

...AND AL THROUGH THE HOUSE...



HER HUSBAND WAS DEAD, AND IT WAS THE BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT SHE'D EVER HAD! SHE STOOD OVER THE LIFELESS BODY SPRAWLED AT HER FEET AND SMILED...



SHE LINGERED... THINKING OF THE MONTHS OF PLANNING THAT HAD CULMINATED IN ONE SWIFT BLOW WITH A POKER. FROM UPSTAIRS SHE HEARD A CHILD'S CRIES...



SHE HURRIED UPSTAIRS, OPENED THE DOOR TO A SMALL BEDROOM...



NO, DEAR, NOT YET! IT'S NOT TIME, SO YOU GO BACK TO SLEEP!



I'LL SEE, DEAR! NOW YOU BE A GOOD LITTLE GIRL AND GO RIGHT TO SLEEP, OR SANTA WON'T COME AT ALL! ALL RIGHT?



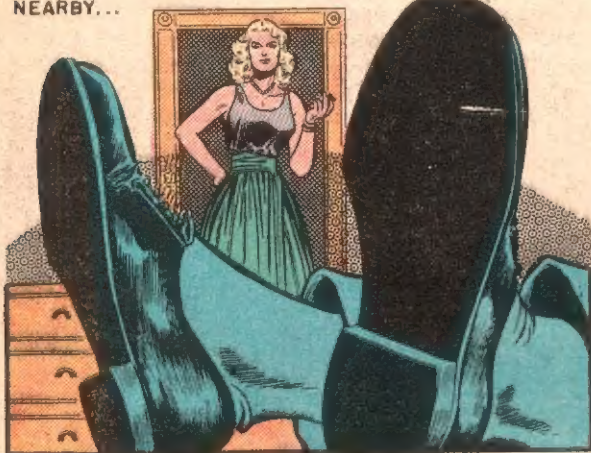
SHE REMAINED UNTIL HER DAUGHTER WAS SLEEPING AGAIN, THEN RETURNED DOWNSTAIRS. SHE STEPPED OVER HER HUSBAND'S BODY, MOVED TO THE TABLE. CASUALLY, SHE LIT A CIGARETTE AND INHALED...



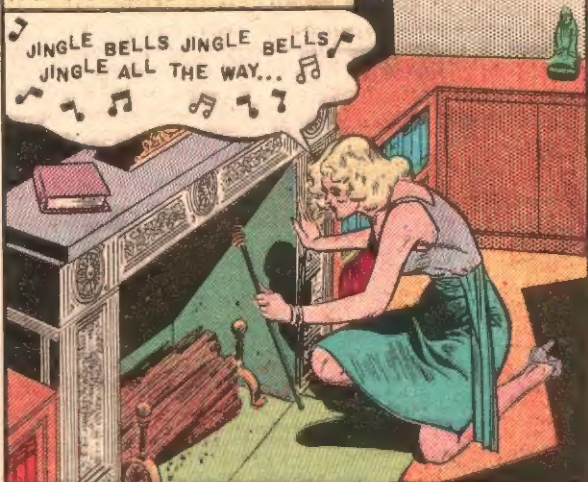
THERE WAS NO HURRY. SHE HAD PLANNED TOO LONG AND TOO WELL. THERE WERE NO NEIGHBORS WITHIN MILES AND SHE HAD ALL NIGHT TO DISPOSE OF THE BODY. SHE THOUGHT OF THE INSURANCE, DRIFTED ACROSS THE ROOM, AND TURNED ON THE RADIO...



THE MUSIC FLOATED THROUGH THE ROOM... **CHRISTMAS CAROLS!** SHE HUMMED SOFTLY, AND LOOKED AGAIN AT THE CORPSE. THE STAINED POKER LAY NEARBY...



SHE PICKED UP THE POKER, FONDLED IT, CLEANED IT, SET IT IN ITS PLACE BY THE FIRE...



SHE TURNED AND GAZED AT THE GAILY DECORATED CHRISTMAS TREE, AND THE PRESENTS BENEATH IT. . .

TSK,TSK...NOW I'LL NEVER KNOW WHETHER OR NOT JOSEPH WOULD HAVE LIKED THAT TIE I BOUGHT FOR HIM! OH,WELL...



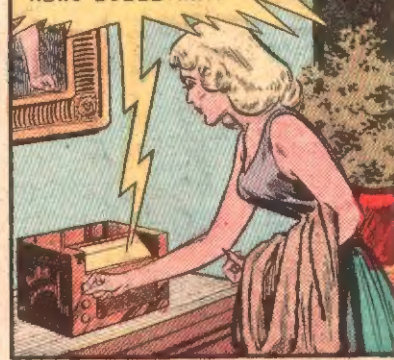
ABRUPTLY,THE MANTEL CLOCK CHIMED THE HOUR. IT WAS TIME. . .

OH! IT'S ELEVEN! TIME TO GET RID OF JOSEPH! AND CAROL WILL BE ALL RIGHT UNTIL I GET BACK!



SHE CROSSED THE ROOM TO TURN OFF THE RADIO... THEN STOPPED, LISTENING. . .

... LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM TO BRING YOU A SPECIAL NEWS BULLETIN...



...WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED A REPORT FROM THE WORLD-WIDE NEWS BUREAU THAT A **HOMICIDAL MANIAC** HAS ESCAPED FROM THE STATE HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE! HE HAS **BRUTALLY MURDERED FOUR WOMEN** AND ALL CITIZENS ARE WARNED TO REMAIN OFF THE STREETS! **THIS MAN IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS!** WE REPEAT, **HE IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS!**



...ANOTHER REPORT HAS JUST BEEN HANDED ME... HERE IS A DESCRIPTION OF THE ESCAPED MANIAC! HE IS SIX FEET, THREE INCHES TALL, TWO HUNDRED TEN POUNDS, HAS DARK EYES, SHAGGY BLACK HAIR! IT IS REPORTED THAT HE IS NOW WEARING A **SANTA CLAUS** COSTUME WHICH HE HAD TAKEN FROM A MAN IN THE VILLAGE OF **PLEASANTVILLE!**

PLEASANTVILLE?! MY GOD! THAT'S JUST SOUTH OF HERE!



...HE IS BELIEVED TO BE HEADED **NORTH!** POLICE OFFICIALS STATE THAT HE WILL **NOT HARM CHILDREN**, AND WILL ONLY INJURE MEN IF HE IS PROVOKED! IT IS SAID THAT HE IS OBSESSED WITH THE **KILLING OF WOMEN!** ALL FOUR WOMEN THAT HE ALREADY HAS MURDERED HAD BEEN **ATTACKED AND VICIOUSLY DISFIGURED...**



ALL WOMEN ARE WARNED TO REMAIN INDOORS! THIS MAN IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS! FURTHER BULLETINS WILL BE BROUGHT TO YOU AS SOON AS THEY ARE RECEIVED. STAY TUNED NOW FOR...



I HADN'T FIGURED ON ANYTHING LIKE THIS! STILL...CAROL WILL BE OKAY IF I LEAVE HER! THE RADIO SAID THAT HE WON'T HARM CHILDREN! AND I HAVE TO GET RID OF JOSEPH!



SHE TIP-TOED TO THE WINDOW AND PEERED THROUGH! IN THE DARKNESS, SHE COULD DISCERN THE RED COSTUME, THE WHITE FUR TRIM...



IN A FIT OF SUDDEN PANIC SHE RUSHED TO THE TELEPHONE AND SNATCHED UP THE RECEIVER TO CALL THE POLICE! SHE STOPPED...AND AN ICY FEAR CLUTCHED HER HEART...



SLOWLY, SHE LOWERED THE RECEIVER. SHE STARED AT THE BODY... AT THE FRONT DOOR... AND THE HOUSE WAS AS QUIET AS DEATH...



MAYBE HE'LL GO AWAY! BUT I'D... I'D BETTER PUT JOSEPH'S BODY IN THE CLOSET! IF CAROL WOKE UP...

THE FRONT DOOR KNOB RATTLED LOUDLY. SHE MOVED AWAY FROM THE CORPSE TO THE DOOR...



HE'S TRYING TO GET IN!
HE ISN'T GOING TO GO AWAY!
HE WANTS ME!

IN THE SILENCE SHE HEARD HIM STOMP FROM THE PORCH! FROM WITHIN, SHE FOLLOWED THE SOUND OF HIS FOOTSTEPS CRUNCHING IN THE SNOW...



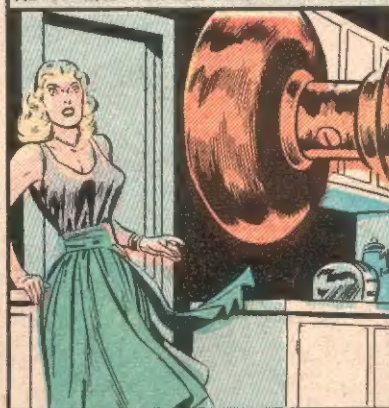
HE... HE'S GOING AROUND THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE! HE'S GOING TO THE BACK DOOR!

MADLY, SHE RACED THROUGH THE HOUSE TO THE BACK DOOR! SHE LOCKED AND BOLTED IT NERVOUSLY...



THERE!

SHE HEARD HIS STEPS CLUMPING ONTO THE BACK PORCH, AND SHE STOOD AWAY FROM THE DOOR, FEARFULLY WATCHING THE KNOB AS IT WAS TURNED AND RATTLED...



AGAIN, SHE LISTENED IN TERROR AS THE FOOTSTEPS LEFT THE PORCH AND MOVED THROUGH THE SNOW...



THE WINDOWS! HE'LL TRY THE WINDOWS!

FRANTICALLY, SHE RUSHED FROM WINDOW TO WINDOW, MAKING CERTAIN THEY WERE ALL LOCKED, ALL THE BLINDS LOWERED! THE RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT THUNDERED IN HER MIND. SHE SHUDDERED CONVULSIVELY...



I'VE GOT TO HURRY!
I'VE GOT TO HURRY!
ONE OF THEM MAY BE UNLOCKED!

WHILE LOCKING ALL THE WINDOWS SHE NOTICED JOSEPH ON THE FLOOR. A STRANGE EXPRESSION FLICKED ACROSS HER FACE. FOR A MOMENT SHE SEEMED BEWILDERED...

JOSEPH... HEAVENS! I'VE GOT TO GET HIM OUT OF SIGHT! IF CAROL EVER WOKE UP AND CAME DOWN-STAIRS!



SHE STARTED DRAGGING THE BODY ACROSS THE FLOOR TO THE CLOSET, THEN STOPPED AND LOOKED AT THE FRONT DOOR AND THEN AT THE WINDOWS. SHE DROPPED THE BODY...

THE WINDOWS! I'VE LOCKED ALL THE WINDOWS... BUT HE COULD *BREAK* THEM! HE'LL COME INSIDE AND *KILL* ME!



SHE HURRIED DOWN TO THE CELLAR, STUMBLING AND ALMOST FALLING IN THE DIM LIGHT! SHE SWISHED HER HAND ACROSS HER FOREHEAD. WIPED AWAY THE DROPS OF PERSPIRATION...



THERE WAS LUMBER IN THE CELLAR. JOSEPH WAS ALWAYS BUYING AND PICKING UP PIECES OF LUMBER AND SILENTLY SHE THANKED HIM! SHE GATHERED AS MANY BOARDS AS SHE COULD, GRABBED A HAMMER AND A HANDFUL OF NAILS...



LOADED WITH HER BURDEN SHE CLUMSILY CLIMBED THE STAIRS AND ENTERED THE LIVING ROOM SHE SAW THE BODY...

OH... I STILL HAVEN'T PUT HIM AWAY IN THE CLOSET! IF CAROL EVER SAW...



SHE PUT DOWN THE BOARDS, THE HAMMER, THE NAILS AND NOW, TREMBLING, SHE LIFTED JOSEPH AND BEGAN ONCE MORE TO DRAG HIM TO THE CLOSET..



SHE STOPPED, SUDDENLY REMEMBERING THE BREAKABLE WINDOWS AND THE FIEND SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE! SHE DROPPED THE BODY, PICKED UP THE LUMBER, THE NAILS, THE HAMMER AND STARTED BOARDING THE WINDOWS...



FROM THE REAR OF THE HOUSE SHE HEARD A POUNDING ON THE BACK DOOR AND SHE DROPPED THE HAMMER AND DROPPED THE NAILS AND SNATCHED UP THE PHONE TO CALL FOR HELP AND REMEMBERED THE BODY ON THE FLOOR...



SHE LET THE PHONE SLIP FROM HER GRASP AND TUMBLE INTO ITS CRADLE AND SHE PICKED UP THE HAMMER AND THE LUMBER AND ALL THE LITTLE NAILS AND FINISHED BOARDING UP THE WINDOWS...



SHE FINISHED THE WINDOWS AND WONDERED WHAT THE MANIAC WAS DOING AND REMEMBERED THE DEAD BODY AND WENT BACK AND DRAGGED IT INTO THE CLOSET...



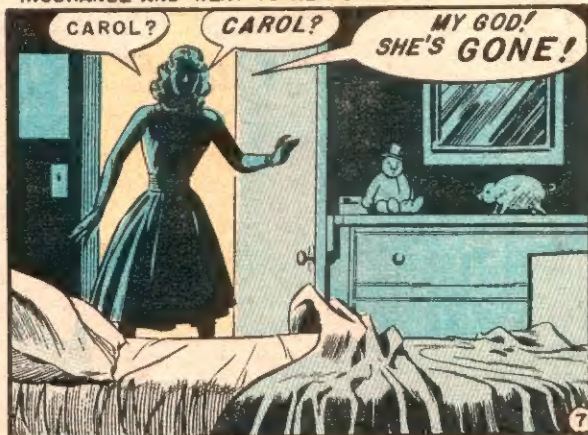
SHE WENT OVER ALL THE WINDOWS AGAIN, CHECKING TO SEE IF THEY WERE ALL BOARDED UP AND MADE SURE THE BODY WAS IN THE CLOSET AND WENT DOWN TO THE CELLAR TO CHECK THE CELLAR DOOR...



THE CELLAR DOOR WAS LOCKED AND SHE RAN UP-STAIRS AND CHECKED THE DOORS AND CHECKED THE WINDOWS AND MADE SURE THE BODY WAS IN THE CLOSET AND RACED UP TO THE ATTIC TO MAKE SURE IT WAS ALL CLOSED UP...

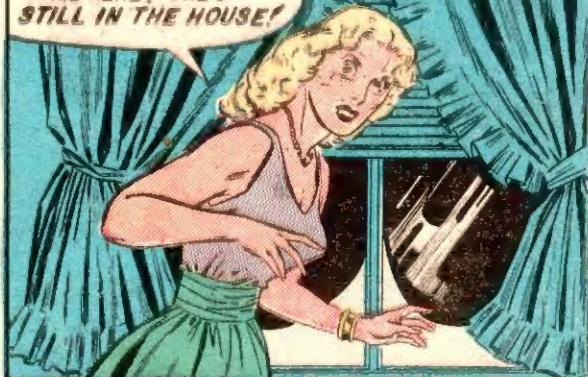


AND AFTER SHE CHECKED THE ATTIC SHE CHECKED THE LOCKS ON ALL THE WINDOWS ON THE SECOND FLOOR AND THOUGHT OF THE FIEND AND ALL THE INSURANCE AND WENT TO HER DAUGHTER'S ROOM...



THE ROOM WAS EMPTY AND SHE TORE THE BED-CLOTHES FROM THE EMPTY BED AND SLAMMED THE DOOR OF THE EMPTY CLOSET AND CHECKED THE LOCK ON THE EMPTY ROOM'S WINDOW...

IT'S LOCKED! SHE'S STILL HERE! SHE'S STILL IN THE HOUSE!



CAROL! CAROL! WHERE ARE YOU?!

HERE I AM MOMMY! HERE I AM! DOWNSTAIRS!



SHE RUSHED HEAD LONG FROM THE EMPTY ROOM, CLATTERED FRANTICALLY DOWN THE STAIRS... AND STOPPED...

LOOK, MOMMY! LOOK! SANTA CLAUS IS HERE! I LET HIM IN!!



HO, HO, HO! AND WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS? DID YOU ENJOY OUR LITTLE STORY? CAROL'S MOMMY JUST GOT THE *BIGGEST* SURPRISE OF HER LIFE... YOU SEE, *THIS SANTA* LOVED TO *SLEIGH BELLES!* AND NEXT TIME YOU SEE

SANTA, BETTER MAKE SURE HE ISN'T SIX FOOT THREE WITH SHAGGY BLACK HAIR! THAT REMINDS ME... I GUESS IT'S TIME FOR ME TO REMOVE THIS MASK...



HEH, HEH! YEP! IT'S ME... THE VAULT KEEPER! YOU DIDN'T THINK WE'D EVER HAVE THE *REAL* SANTA CLAUS IN *THIS* HORROR MAG, DID YOU? OH... I SUPPOSE YOU'VE BEEN WONDERING JUST WHAT I'VE GOT IN THIS SACK! HEH! IT'S ONLY WHAT'S LEFT OF CAROL'S

MOMMY AFTER THAT MANIAC WAS *THROUGH* WITH HER! HEH, HEH, HEH, HEH! AND BY THE WAY...

MERRY CHRISTMAS!



THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! FOR A WHILE, I THOUGHT THE *VAULT-KEEPER* WAS GOING TO GET *SICKENINGLY SWEET* WITH THAT *SANTA CLAUS* ROUTINE! DON'T GET ME *WRONG!* SANTA'S ALL RIGHT IN HIS PLACE! *BUT THIS AIN'T THE PLACE!* ENOUGH IS ENOUGH, KNOW WHAT I MEAN? ANYHOO—HAH, HERE'S A *REAL CREEPY CONCOCTION* THAT'LL KNOCK YOU OFF YOUR PINS, BUT *GOOD!* AND IT COMES TO YOU WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF *THE CRYPT-KEEPER*, WHICH IS *ME!* I CALL IT...

TOMBS-DAY!



THE CARAVAN PLODDED ON, SILHOUETTED AGAINST A SKY STILL BURNING WITH THE FIRE OF A SETTING SUN. PERCHED ATOP THEIR CAMELS, THREE AMERICANS LOOKED ANXIOUSLY AHEAD, ACROSS THE DARKENING SAND DUNES, TO THEIR DESTINATION.. THE *PYRAMID OF KHAFFRA!* PROFESSOR BURTON STIRRED IN HIS SADDLE AND SIGHED TIREDLY

WELL, THERE IT IS! WE'RE ALMOST TO THE END OF OUR JOURNEY!

IT'S A GOOD THING, TOO! I'M GETTING A RIT SADDLE SORE! AND I CAN'T WAIT TO FIND OUT WHY OUR FIRST EXPEDITION *DISAPPEARED!*



Jack Davis

PROFESSOR BURTON FELL SILENT AGAIN. IT HAD BEEN MANY YEARS SINCE HE HAD LAST BEEN IN THE NILE VALLEY, AND THOUGH THIS RETURN ELATED HIM, HE FELT VERY PERTURBED AT THE CAUSE OF HIS RETURN...THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF THE PREVIOUS EXPEDITION!

PROFESSOR...ISN'T THAT THE FAMOUS SPHINX I'VE READ SO MUCH ABOUT?

EH? OH...YES, MISS ALLEN! THAT'S THE SPHINX OF GIZEH!



MELODY ALLEN WAS A JOURNALIST...AND THE PROFESSOR KNEW THAT SHE WAS HOPING FOR MORE FACTS FOR HER STORY. HE TURNED TO FACE THE LOVELY WOMAN...

THIS SPHINX, MISS ALLEN, WAS CARVED FROM SOLID ROCK NEARLY *FIVE THOUSAND YEARS AGO!* IT'S HEAD IS A PORTRAIT OF KING KHAFFRA, WHOSE TOMB RESTS IN THAT PYRAMID JUST AHEAD OF US! THIS ENTIRE AREA IS REALLY A HUGE *BURIAL GROUND*, AND THIS SPHINX STANDS LIKE A SENTINEL, GUARDING THE TOMBS!



EGYPTIANS TELL FANTASTIC STORIES ABOUT THE SPHINX! ITS SURFACE HAS BEEN WORN AWAY BY THE RAVAGES OF TIME, LEAVING A VERY STRANGE, INSCRUTABLE EXPRESSION, WHICH HAS CAUSED THE ARABS TO CALL IT...*THE FATHER OF TERRORS!*

HOW WEIRD!



THE CARAVAN CONTINUED PAST THE EVER-SILENT SPHINX AND CAME TO A HALT BEFORE THE HUGE PYRAMID...

WELL...HERE WE ARE! PERHAPS WE'LL SOON KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE FIRST EXPEDITION!

DO YOU HAVE *ANY* IDEA WHY THEY ALL SO SUDDENLY VANISHED, PROFESSOR?



THE EGYPTIANS TOOK GREAT PAINS TO PROTECT THEIR DEAD, MISS ALLEN! THEY BUILT THIS GREAT PYRAMID AS A TOMB FOR KING KHAFFRA, THEN HONEYCOMBED IT WITH SECRET PASSAGES AND FALSE BURIAL CHAMBERS TO MISLEAD ANYONE WHO ENTERED!



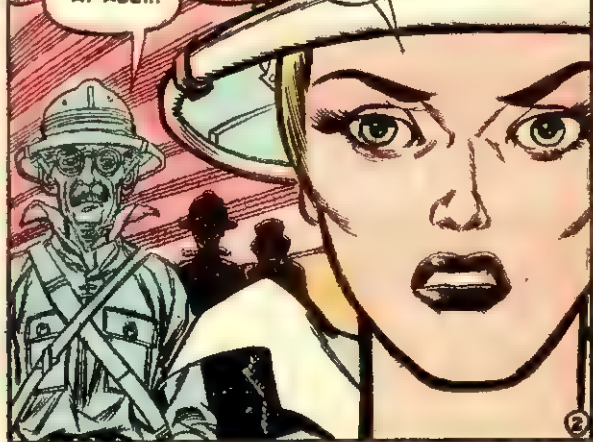
WE KNOW FROM MESSAGES THEY SENT US THAT THE FIRST GROUP WAS ON THE VERGE OF A MONUMENTAL DISCOVERY! I BELIEVE THEY HAD STUMBLED UPON A SECRET CHAMBER OR PASSAGEWAY THAT WOULD LEAD THEM TO THE *REAL* TOMB OF KING KHAFFRA. AND I THINK THEY MUST HAVE BECOME *LOST* IN THE LABRYINTHS!

BUT...BUT THAT WAS *MONTHS* AGO! HOW... HOW COULD THEY *LIVE*?



I HARDLY THINK WE'LL FIND THEM *ALIVE*, MISS ALLEN...IF WE FIND THEM AT ALL...

OH...



PROFESSOR BURTON TURNED AND WEARILY MOUNTED THE STONE-SLAB STEPS THAT LED TO THE PYRAMID ENTRANCE. THE OTHERS, IN SINGLE-FILE, FOLLOWED CLOSE BEHIND ...

WE'LL MAKE A CURSORY EXAMINATION OF THE INTERIOR WHILE IT'S STILL LIGHT! IT'S JUST POSSIBLE THAT WE'LL FIND SOMETHING!

GOOD IDEA! WE CAN SET UP CAMP LATER!



THEIR WAY ILLUMINATED BY LAMPS, THE SMALL GROUP MUDDLED THROUGH A MAZE OF PASSAGES AND CHAMBERS, DOWN LONG FLIGHTS OF NARROW STAIRS FILLED WITH THE STALE, MUSTY ODOR OF AIR BEFOULED AGES PAST...

HAVEN'T WE GONE FAR ENOUGH? WE MIGHT GET LOST!

PERHAPS YOU'RE RIGHT! WE'LL REST HERE A MOMENT, THEN MAKE OUR WAY BACK TO SET UP CAMP!



(SIGH) I WAS HOPING WE'D FIND *SOME* CLUE TO THEIR DISAPPEARANCE!

THIS PLACE IS LIKE AN OVEN! SO HARD TO BREATHE...



MAYBE TOMORROW WE'LL HAVE BETTER LUCK! WHEN WE'RE RESTED..

PROFESSOR! ONE OF THE ARABS JUST FOUND SOMETHING! COME QUICKLY!



HURRIEDLY, THEY SCRAMBLED THROUGH THE NARROW PASSAGEWAY...

GOOD HEAVENS! IT'S A SECRET PANEL! MAYBE THE FIRST GROUP FOUND THIS, TOO!

COME ON! WE MUST FIND OUT! LEAD THE WAY, ABBEY!



THE LITTLE ARAB CAUTIOUSLY ENTERED THE SECRET PASSAGE, FOLLOWED BY THE OTHERS UNTIL ALL WERE INSIDE. THE PROFESSOR SHONE HIS LAMP AROUND TO DISCERN THE NATURE OF HIS SURROUNDINGS.

WHY, THIS PASSAGE IS EVEN NARROWER THAN THE ONE WE JUST..

PROFESSOR! THE PANEL IS CLOSING! WE'VE GOT TO STOP IT!



IN A GROUP THEY HURLED THEMSELVES AT THE MASSIVE STONE PANEL TO PREVENT ITS CLOSING TO NO AVAIL.

IT'S CLOSED!

WE'RE LOCKED IN!

MY GOD!

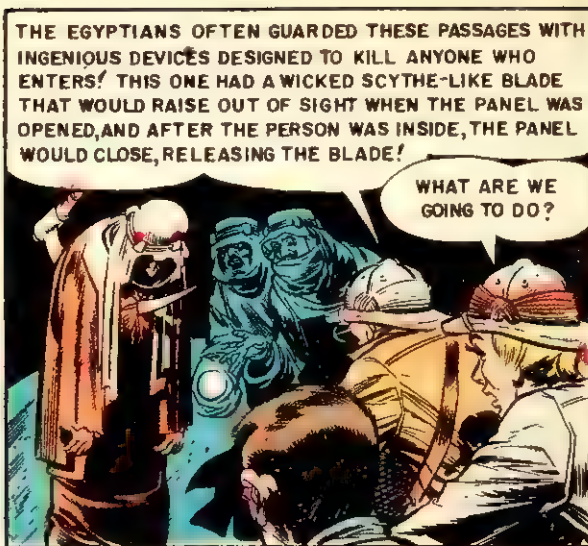




GOOD LORD!
IT'S ABBEY!
HE'S DEAD!

WHAT
HAPPENED
TO HIM?!

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN!
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN
THIS PASSAGEWAY WOULD
HAVE A BOOBY-TRAP!



THE EGYPTIANS OFTEN GUARDED THESE PASSAGES WITH
INGENIOUS DEVICES DESIGNED TO KILL ANYONE WHO
ENTERS! THIS ONE HAD A WICKED SCYTHE-LIKE BLADE
THAT WOULD RAISE OUT OF SIGHT WHEN THE PANEL WAS
OPENED, AND AFTER THE PERSON WAS INSIDE, THE PANEL
WOULD CLOSE, RELEASING THE BLADE!

WHAT ARE WE
GOING TO DO?



PROFESSOR BURTON PULLED A
HANDKERCHIEF FROM HIS POCKET
AND WIPED HIS BEADED BROW...

I'M AFRAID WE HAVE
NO CHOICE! WE CAN'T
GET OUT THE WAY WE
ENTERED... WE MUST
GO FORWARD!

I...GUESS
YOU'RE
RIGHT!

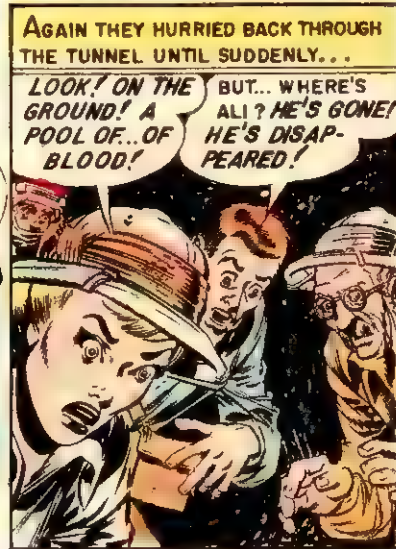


SLOWLY THEY INCHED THEIR WAY
THROUGH THE PASSAGEWAY. SWEAT
SOAKED THEIR BODIES; THEIR
BREATHS CAME IN SHORT, LABORED
GASPS...

MY GOD!
WHAT'S THAT?!

I DON'T KNOW!
WE'RE ALL HERE!
NO! WAIT! ALI
IS MISSING!

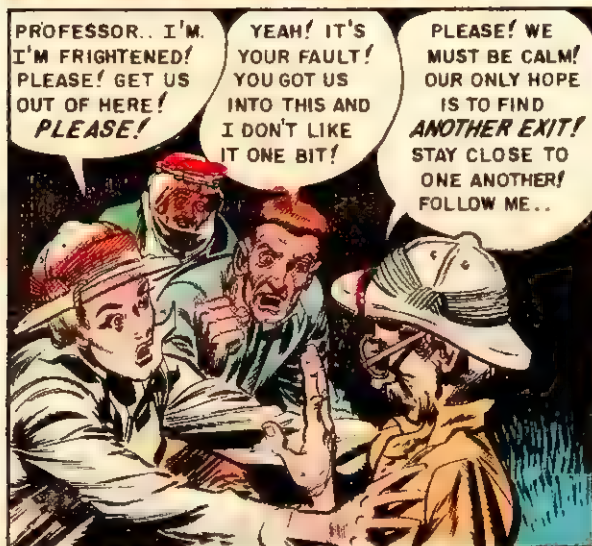
AAAGHHH...



AGAIN THEY HURRIED BACK THROUGH
THE TUNNEL UNTIL SUDDENLY...

LOOK! ON THE
GROUND! A
POOL OF... OF
BLOOD!

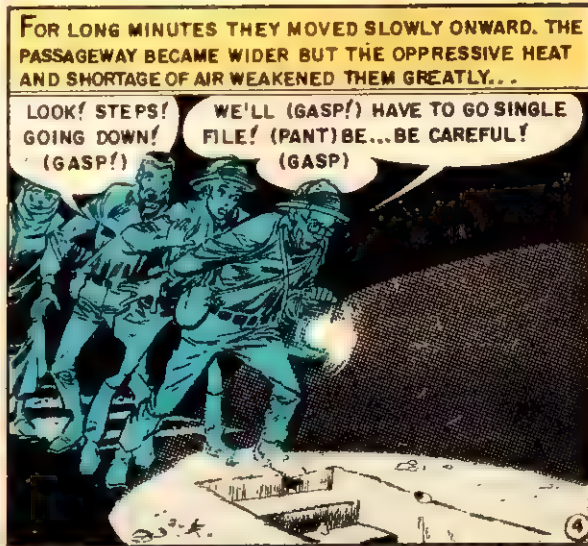
BUT... WHERE'S
ALI? HE'S GONE!
HE'S DISAP-
PEARED!



PROFESSOR... I'M
I'M FRIGHTENED!
PLEASE! GET US
OUT OF HERE!
PLEASE!

YEAH! IT'S
YOUR FAULT!
YOU GOT US
INTO THIS AND
I DON'T LIKE
IT ONE BIT!

PLEASE! WE
MUST BE CALM!
OUR ONLY HOPE
IS TO FIND
ANOTHER EXIT!
STAY CLOSE TO
ONE ANOTHER!
FOLLOW ME...



FOR LONG MINUTES THEY MOVED SLOWLY ONWARD. THE
PASSAGEWAY BECAME WIDER BUT THE OPPRESSIVE HEAT
AND SHORTAGE OF AIR WEAKENED THEM GREATLY...

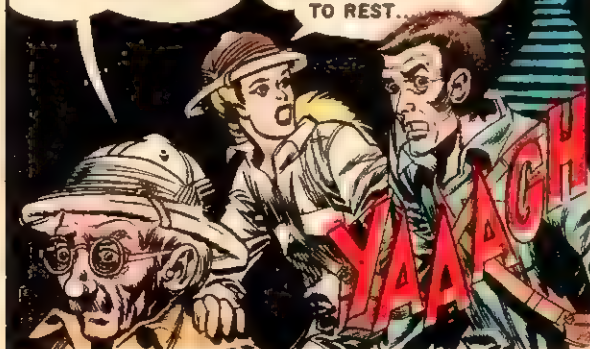
LOOK! STEPS!
GOING DOWN!
(GASP!)

WE'LL (GASP!) HAVE TO GO SINGLE
FILE! (PANT) BE... BE CAREFUL!
(GASP)

PRECEDED BY THE LIGHT OF HIS LAMP, THE PROFESSOR WARILY EDGED DOWN THE STEEPLY INCLINED STAIRS. HE FELT MELODY ALLEN'S FINGERS GRIPPING HIS SHOULDER TIGHTLY... TREMBLINGLY! DOWN... DEEPER AND DEEPER...

(GASP!) WON'T THESE STAIRS EVER END?... SO TIRED...(GASP)

WAIT... PROFESSOR... WAIT FOR HASSAN... (GASP) HE... HAD TO... TO REST...

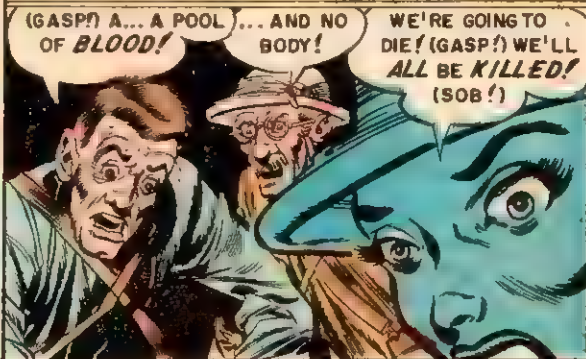


THE SHOCKING, BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM FROZE THEM TO THE SPOT! FOR A MOMENT ONLY THE SOUND OF THEIR HEAVY BREATHING COULD BE HEARD IN THE SILENCE, AS THEY STARED INTO ONE ANOTHER'S EYES. THEN, WITHOUT A WORD, THEY CLAMBERED DUMBLY BACK UP THE LONG STAIRS, KNOWING THAT IT WAS TOO LATE... KNOWING FULL WELL JUST WHAT THEY WOULD FIND...

(GASP!) A... A POOL... OF BLOOD!

... AND NO BODY!

WE'RE GOING TO DIE! (GASP!) WE'LL ALL BE KILLED! (SOB!)



WE'LL ALL DIE! (GASP!) ONE BY ONE, WE'LL ALL BE KILLED! (SOB! SOB!)

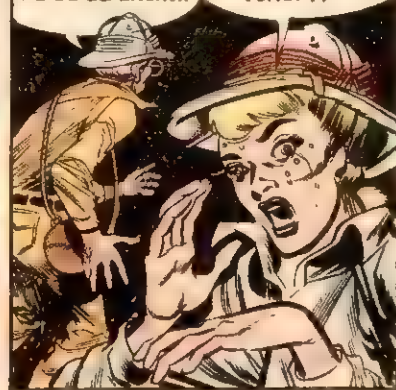
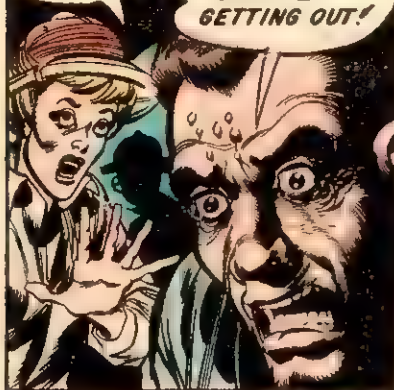
WELL, NOTHING'S GOING TO KILL ME! I'M NOT GOING ANY FURTHER! (GASP!) I'M GOING BACK! I'M GETTING OUT!

NO! NO! COME BACK! YOU'LL GET LOST! (GASP!) ... WE... MUST STAY TOGETHER! (GASP!) COME... BACK... COUGH!

LET HIM GO! DON'T... DON'T CHASE HIM! (GASP) HE'LL COME BACK... (GASP)

... HE... HE HAS NO LIGHT! HE WON'T... BE ABLE TO SEE (GASP) YOU'RE... RIGHT... HE'LL BE BACK...

STAY HERE... WITH ME! (GASP!) I'M... I'M FRIGHTENED (SOB) JUST... JUST DON'T (SOB) LEAVE ME... (GASP!)



PROFESSOR BURTON SLUMPED BACK WEAKLY TO THE STONE FLOOR BESIDE THE SOBBING GIRL. HE CRADLED HIS HEAD ON HIS ARMS, STIFLED A CRY OF ANGUISH. THE LACK OF AIR CAUSED HIS HEAD TO POUND AND HIS CHEST TO ACHE. THEY WAITED IN THE SILENCE. THEY WAITED... LISTENING, HOPING, PRAYING... AND TIME WAS AN ETERNAL SECOND...



SUDDENLY, ECHOING THROUGH THE ANCIENT PASSAGES OF THE PYRAMID, AN AGONIZED SCREAM SPLIT THE SILENCE...



NEITHER MOVED. THEY BOTH KNEW IT WAS HOPELESS. THEIR STRENGTH HAD BECOME TOO PRECIOUS TO WASTE ON A DEAD MAN THEY WOULD NEVER FIND...

... THERE'S *SOMEONE* IN HERE WITH US! I FEEL IT! THOSE DEATHS WEREN'T ACCIDENTS! SOMEONE REMOVED THE BODIES! WHO IS IT, PROFESSOR? WHO IS IT?!

I... I DON'T KNOW. (GASP!) I'VE BEEN THINKING THE SAME THING! SOMEONE... OR SOME *THING*... IS DELIBERATELY TRYING TO KILL US! BUT... IT'S SO FANTASTIC... I... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!



MELODY ALLEN STRUGGLED TO RAISE HERSELF.

YOU... YOU SAID... SOME 'THING'! WHAT

THERE'S A LEGEND ABOUT THE *SPHINX*! THEY SAY THAT AGES AGO A WAY WAS FOUND TO CROSS-BREED A *LION* WITH A *HUMAN*, AND THE CREATURE THAT DEVELOPED LIVED FOR *THOUSANDS* OF YEARS! THEY SAY THE *SPHINX* ACTUALLY LIVED!



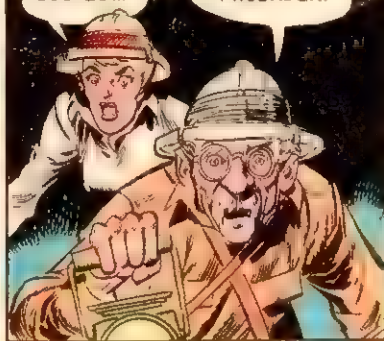
THEY STUMBLED DOWN THE LONG FLIGHT OF STEPS, ALONG A CORRIDOR...

... BUT IT WAS A *VICIOUS* CREATURE, AND SO TERRIBLY *POWERFUL* AS TO DEFY DESCRIPTION! AND BECAUSE THERE WAS NO OTHER *USE* FOR IT, THEY SUPPOSEDLY *LOCKED* IT IN THIS PYRAMID TO GUARD KING *KHAFRA'S* TOMB!



NONSENSE! (GASP!) ...PROBABLY SOME MEMBER OF THE FIRST EXPEDITION... HIDING HERE... KILLING US... (GASP) HIDING ALL THE BODIES...

...HADN'T THOUGHT OF *THAT*! MAYBE THEY FOUND... GREAT *WEALTH*! MAYBE SOMEONE BECAME *GREEDY*! YES! (GASP) THAT'S PROBABLY...



THE PROFESSOR'S VOICE TRAILED OFF INTO THE DARKNESS. BEFORE THEM STOOD AN OPEN DOOR...

... PROFESSOR... BE CAREFUL! DON'T... DON'T GO IN THERE!

BUT THIS IS IT! MISS ALLEN, BEHIND THIS DOOR LIES THE *ANSWER*! I'M SURE OF IT! WE'VE FOUND KING *KHAFRA'S* REAL TOMB!



TOGETHER, THEY STEPPED THROUGH THE DOORWAY.

AH! I KNEW IT! THE MUMMY THAT WAS REMOVED FROM THIS PYRAMID BY OUR MUSEUM YEARS AGO WAS *NOT* THE REAL KING *KHAFRA*! THIS IS THE OUTER CHAMBER TO HIS *TOMB*! THERE MUST BE A SECRET PANEL...

PROFESSOR! THERE IT IS! OVER THERE! IT'S OPEN!



ON HANDS AND KNEES THEY CRAWLED SLOWLY, NERVOUSLY, UNDER THE HINGED STONE SLAB. THEY Huddled TOGETHER BY THE ENTRANCE, THEIR BODIES QUIVERING WITH FEAR AND EXPECTANCY, THEIR HEARTS POUNDING

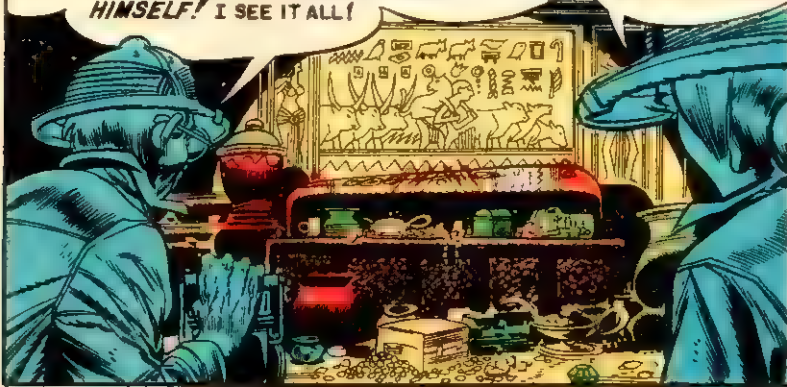
PROFESSOR (GASP) WHAT IS IT? WHERE ARE WE? WHAT'S IN HERE? (GASP)

I WAS RIGHT! THIS IS THE *AUTHENTIC* TOMB OF KING *KHAFRA*! LOOK!



LOOK! LOOK, MISS ALLEN! WE'VE FOUND IT! LOOK AT THE **WEALTH** IN HERE! (GASP!) **DIAMONDS! RUBIES! SILVER! GOLD! A FORTUNE!** YOU WERE RIGHT, MISS ALLEN! SOME MEMBER OF THE FIRST EXPEDITION MUST HAVE LET THIS GO TO HIS HEAD! HE OBVIOUSLY WANTED TO **KEEP IT ALL FOR HIMSELF!** I SEE IT ALL!

MY GOD! I... I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED THIS IF... IF I HADN'T SEEN IT WITH MY OWN EYES!



THESE PEARLS ARE EXQUISITE! I NEVER THOUGHT THERE WAS THIS MUCH TREASURE IN THE **WHOLE WORLD!**

MAGNIFICENT! THE WORKMANSHIP IS SUPERB! AND... AND THESE HIEROGLYPHICS! I WONDER IF I CAN DECIPHER THEM!



A WOMAN... WOULD SELL HER SOUL FOR SUCH BEAUTIFUL JEWELS!

LET'S SEE... "IN THE 13TH DYNASTY"... HMM... THIS IS EASIER THAN I THOUGHT! "THERE... CAME INTO... BEING..." HMM...



GOOD LORD! IT'S TRUE! THE LEGEND IS TRUE!

WHAT? WHAT LEGEND? WH... WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!



THE LEGEND OF THE SPHINX! THE SPHINX LIVED! IT SAYS SO ON THE WALL!

WHAT OF IT? AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, SURELY, YOU DON'T...



THEY TURNED AND STARED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SOUND! IN THE YELLOW LIGHT OF THE LAMP, THEY SAW A MONSTROUS CREATURE ENTER THROUGH THE OPENING IN THE WALL... A CREATURE WITH A **BODY OF A HUGE LION** AND THE WITHERED, AGES OLD **HEAD OF A MAN!** THE GIRL SLUMPED TO THE FLOOR... AND PROFESSOR BURTON HAD TIME TO EMIT ONE SHORT, PETRIFIED SCREAM BEFORE THE **SPHINX LEAPED!**



HEH, HEH, HEH! THAT MAKES **TWO** EXPEDITIONS THAT HAVE COMPLETELY DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE! ANYONE CARE FOR A FREE TRIP TO **EGYPT?** ALL YOU HAVE TO DO, NOW THAT YOU'VE READ THIS STORY, IS TO BRING A WHIP, A CHAIR, AND A PISTOL FILLED WITH BLANKS... AND YOU'RE

ALL SET! THE TREASURE WILL BE YOURS! AND IF ANYONE WRITES IN TO TELL ME THIS STORY **SPHINX**, I'LL CROWN HIM! BY THE BYE BYE, CASE YOU DIDN'T KNOW, YOU'LL FIND INFO RE THE **E-CO FAN-ADDICT CLUB** ON THE INSIDE FRONT COVER! GIVE MY LOVE TO YER **MUMMIES!** HEH, HEH, HEH!



THE END

SPACE TO BREATHE!

Lionel Blivet stamped down on the brake, switched off the ignition key and swung out of the car. The air was dry and clear up here on the narrow dirt road; high above towered the bald cliffs of the Waraji mountain range. Lionel reached into the sedan through the open window, and turned a dashboard dial. There was a momentary whirr, then the sound of blaring trumpets issued from the car radio. Lionel smiled, his sense of isolation relieved by the apparent nearness of the studio orchestra... it was a family joke that Lionel would probably try to sneak a portable radio into his coffin, to accompany him on his long trek to the cemetery!

The sky above was glittering blue, dotted occasionally by creamy suds of cloud. This was the sort of freedom that Lionel hankered for... the open space here in the lofty hills gave a man a chance to *breathe*! He might even amble over to that crude path which snaked up toward the crest of the nearest outcropping of rock, Lionel mused. He turned, his hand moving toward the off-on switch of the car radio. He'd be gone for a short while, exploring the hills... no sense in running down the battery, was there?

At that moment a strange noise crescendoed down from far above... from some hidden niche in the hill... and Lionel whirled, his curiosity aroused. A series of blurred shadows moved across the mountain's face; high up under the crest there appeared to be a cave which had escaped previous detection. Lionel drew a deep breath, his blood tingling, and raced toward the path. Worth looking into... might be something exciting up there in that cave!

The sound of the car radio gradually diminished as Lionel slithered and groped up the steep incline. By the time he had reached the mouth of the cave Lionel had to turn and peer far down to reassure himself that his car was where he had left it. Then he plunged into the murky darkness of the cave.

Almost at once he was aware of a furious flapping against his body, stunning him with its brutal force. He shook his head and tried to back out of the cave but, to his surprise, discovered he was stretched on the rough ground... he had obviously been knocked off his feet the moment he stepped out of the sunlight! Lionel squinted, trying to accustom his eyes to the perilous darkness; suddenly the *things* were on him again... slashing savagely at his face, ripping at the arms he threw up to protect himself. Now he was on his back, squirming in agony, blanketed by a swarm of hissing creatures which tore mercilessly at his flesh.

He was badly wounded, Lionel knew instinctively, tasting blood with his tongue. And then, hearing the redoubled sound of flailing wings, he realized who his assailants were. He had walked innocently into a cave housing a horde of bloodthirsty, man-killing **BATS!**

On his face, his nose buried in the gritty sand, Lionel felt the vicious, incessant, deadly jabbing at the back of his skull. And in that last moment of consciousness, Lionel Blivet's brain held a single thought. *I'm doomed to die up here in this god-forsaken cave, an inner voice whispered, and I didn't turn off the car radio! That battery... it's going to... to... AEEEEEEEE!*



YEP, KIDDIES! E.C.'S NEW HUMOR MAG, **PANIC** IS ON SALE. SO RUSH DOWN TO YOUR FAVORITE NEWSSTAND AND GET YOUR COPY. HOWEVER IF YOU *DON'T* WANT TO *MISS* ANY FOOTBALL GAMES... IF YOU WANT TO **READ PANIC** AND **SIT IN THE BOWL** AT THE **SAME TIME**... **SUBSCRIBE!** FILL OUT THE COUPON AND MAIL TO...

THE PANICKY EDITORS OF:
PANIC
ROOM 106
225 LAFAYETTE ST.
N.Y.C., 12, N.Y.

PLEASE SEND ME THE NEXT 8
ISSUES OF **PANIC** FOR WHICH I ENCLOSE
ONE DOLLAR (\$1.00)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

ZONE _____

STATE _____

THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

Heh, heh! BIG NEWS THIS ISSUE! Big, tall, thin news! I get rid of one editor...wore him down, I did!... and up pops another idiot to take his place! Yep... it's a PANIC—(The name of E.C.'s newest mag!—ed.) Just because Feldstein gets busy putting out a new mag, (PANIC!—ed.) I figure I'll do E.C. a big favor...and offer myself free as editor. They don't take ME...but take that crumb CRAIG what's been drawing my stories for the last four years! Imagine... putting a mere artist over ME! So after four years, at least I get a change of one of the two insipid faces that have been leering at me. Course, Obnoxious Willy's still around. Next, I go to work on him! Well—enough of this tomfoolery...let's plunge into the mail sack...

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I think the OLD WITCH, the CRYPT-KEEPER, and you are the world's three most beautiful women.

Rosemary Cage
Washington, D. C.

Awright now! Enough is enough...and too much is sufficient! The time has finally come to clear up what is rapidly becoming a downright embarrassing situation, to put it mildly. And I have no desire to put it mildly. (So why put it?—ed.) On the job ten minutes, and already poking your tall, thin nose in, eh, Craig? (Please...no trouble. I've been sick!—ed.) Anyway...as I was saying before I was so crudely interrupted...me and C.K. are MEN! (Are what?—ed.) MALES! Dincha read Kinsey, ya low-lifes? So let not anyone make said error a-gain!

Dear V.K.,

The vocabulary in your delightfully disgusting tales of horror should deeply impress those of your readers with a high intellectual capacity, as well as raise the level of word recognition of your younger readers. Keep up the fine work.

Richard Gunst
Richmond, Va

Soitenly, youse slob. Stick wit me, and youse'll get a great big vocabu...vocabu...youse'll know a lotta big woids too.

Dear Vault-Keeper,

...As time goes on, I'm realizing more and more the great difference between yours and the other publishing companies. Anyone can easily tell by reading just one good old E.C. that your company puts much more effort and thinking into every story than the other trashy companies would ever dream of doing.

Allan Katz
Flushing, Long Island

Soitenly, youse slob. Stick wit us, and youse'll get phantasmagorical paroxysms replete with silvery clangors of exultation. (Wha...?—ed.)

And now for a few choice tid-bits from my talented readers! First, an E.C. PARANOIAC PARODY to be sung to the tune of Take Me Out to the Ball Game...submitted by Michael Reynolds of Somerset, Pa.:

Stake me out in the ball park
Stake me out in a shroud
Slash me and stretch me upon the rack
After I'm dead I will surely come back.
Let me chew, chew, chew on the home team
If they don't scream it's a shame
For it's one, two, three hacks you're dead
In the old ball game!

Now a touch of E.C. PERVERTED POETRY submitted by Larry Tucker and Arnold Hageman of Anaconda, Montana:

Greasy, grizzly, gopher guts
Are just the thing to eat;
Give you great big bulging eyes
And a couple extra feet!
or
Mary had a little ram
Who gored her just for show;
Now all that's left of Mary
Is a finger and a toe!

And from Kreda Freeman of Star, Idaho:

I was walkin' down the road
When I stepped upon a toad
Its guts fell out and I fell in
That was the end of me and him.

And from Paul H. Cox of Farmville, N. C.:

On top of Old Smokey
All covered with red
I lost my true loved one...
I bashed in her head!

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I like your magazines very much, but I want you to know that my father is an undertaker, and a very nice undertaker too. I don't like the way you always show undertakers to be fiendish monsters and depraved maniacs. Please don't run any more stories about undertakers, like that.

Jerry Simonetti
San Francisco, Calif.

I'm all choked up! All right, Jerry...no more nasty stories about undertakers. I promise!

And now for a few commercials before closing!! New subscription rate...8 issues of the VAULT OF HORROR...one buck...manila envelopes. And remember...JOIN THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB...details on the inside front cover! And then there's PANIC don't miss the first issue of this hot item! Guaranteed a sell-out...even if my idiot editors have to buy up all the copies themselves! And do write, you dears...more poetry, songs, titles, things, and dead animals! The address for stuff like that there is:

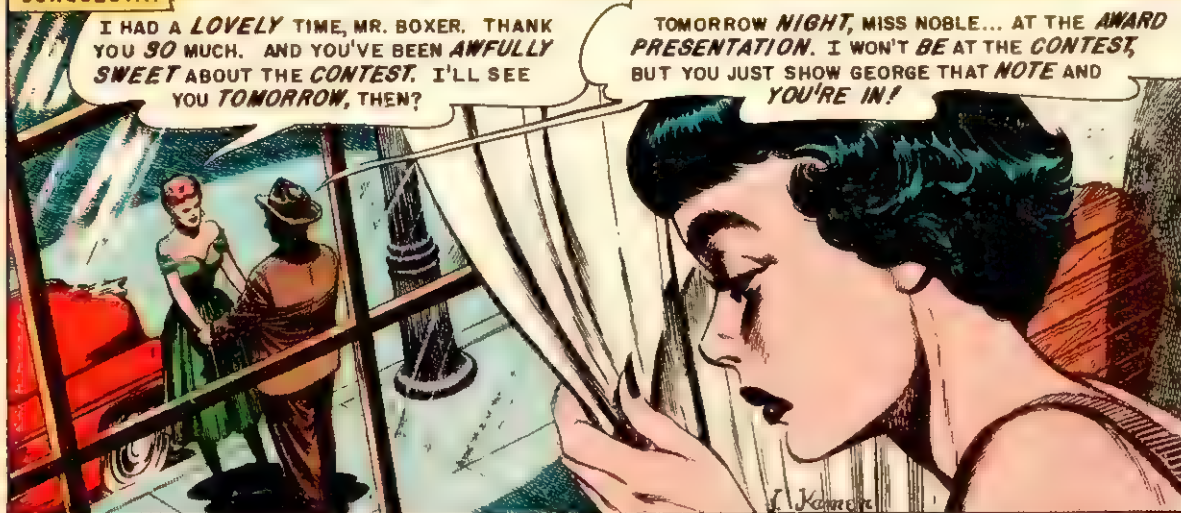
The Vault-Keeper
Room 706, Dept. 35
225 Lafayette Street
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

HERE'S A PRETTY HORRIBLE YARN
ABOUT A GAL WHO GOT HER...

BEAUTY REST



HELEN CURTIS DREW ASIDE THE FLIMSY CURTAIN THAT DRAPED THE SOLE WINDOW OF THE CHEAP FURNISHED ROOM SHE SHARED WITH JOYCE NOBLE AND GAZED OUT INTO THE DESERTED MIDNIGHT STREET. HELEN FUMED. LUCKY JOYCE. JOYCE WAS ALWAYS GOING OUT ON DATES, BEING SHOWN THE TOWN, BEING TAKEN TO NIGHTCLUBS AND FANCY PARTIES... WHILE SHE, HELEN, WAS FORCED TO SPEND LONELY EVENINGS IN THEIR COLD-WATER FLAT. NOW SHE WATCHED AS THE FLASHY CAR DREW UP TO THE CURB AND JOYCE GOT OUT FOLLOWED BY HER LATEST CONQUEST...



I HAD A *LOVELY* TIME, MR. BOXER. THANK YOU *SO* MUCH. AND YOU'VE BEEN *AWFULLY SWEET* ABOUT THE CONTEST. I'LL SEE YOU *TOMORROW*, THEN?

TOMORROW NIGHT, MISS NOBLE... AT THE *AWARD PRESENTATION*. I WON'T *BE* AT THE *CONTEST*, BUT YOU JUST SHOW GEORGE THAT *NOTE* AND *YOU'RE IN!*

HELEN WATCHED AS JOYCE CLEVERLY AVOIDED MR. BOXER'S FUMBLING ATTEMPTS TO KISS HER GOOD-NIGHT. AFTER A WHILE, HE GAVE UP AND DROVE OFF, AND JOYCE CAME INSIDE.

HAVE A *NICE TIME*, HONEY?

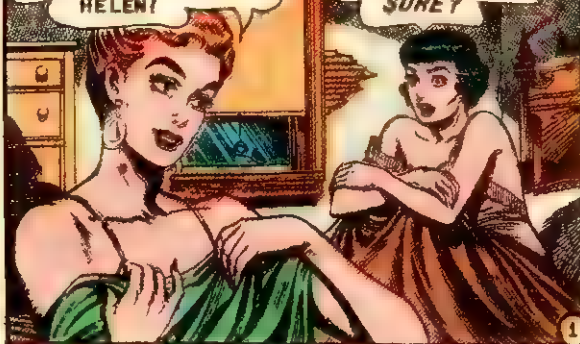
OH! *HELEN!* YOU'RE *UP!* I HOPE I DIDN'T *AWAKEN* YOU. I HAVE SUCH *WONDERFUL NEWS*, DARLING!



HELEN STUDIED JOYCE AS SHE UNDRESSED. PRETTY JOYCE. SHE'D ALWAYS MANAGED TO GET THE BREAKS, EVER SINCE THEY'D BOTH COME TO NEW YORK CITY IN SEARCH OF MODELING CAREERS.

I'M GOING TO WIN A *BEAUTY CONTEST* TOMORROW MORNING, HELEN!

GOING TO *WIN?* I DON'T *UNDERSTAND!* HOW CAN YOU BE *SURE?*



JOYCE REACHED FOR HER BAG AND HANDED HER JEALOUS ROOMMATE THE SLIP OF PAPER MR. BOXER HAD GIVEN HER...

JUST READ THAT!

'GEORGE, BE SURE THE BEARER OF THIS NOTE WINS THE CONTEST TODAY!' BOXER'



JOYCE GIGGLED...

SEE? IT'S ALL FIXED! IT'S A PUT-UP JOB. I WIN, COME WHAT MAY!

THAT'S WONDERFUL FOR YOU, HONEY! WHAT KIND OF CONTEST IS IT?



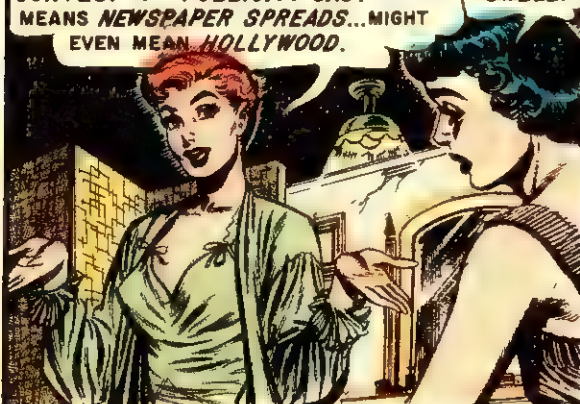
I'M GOING TO BE 'MISS CORPSE OF 1954'!

MISS...WHAT? CORPSE? WHAT IN...?



THE UNDERTAKERS' AND EMBALMERS' ASSOCIATION IS HAVING A CONVENTION IN NEW YORK THIS WEEK. THE BEAUTY CONTEST IS A PUBLICITY GAG. BUT IT MEANS NEWSPAPER SPREADS...MIGHT EVEN MEAN HOLLYWOOD.

GEE, JOYCE! THAT'S SWELL!



HELEN SMILED EVEN THOUGH HER STOMACH WAS CURDLING. JOYCE WAS ALWAYS FORTUNATE THAT WAY. SHE'D ALWAYS MANAGED TO LAND A FEW MODELING JOBS WHILE HELEN'D DRAWN BLANK AFTER BLANK. AND NOW THIS...

I'M SO EXCITED, HELEN. I DON'T THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO SLEEP.

LET ME FIX YOU A WARM DRINK OF MILK, BABY.



HELEN GOT OUT OF BED AND SLIPPED BEHIND THE SCREEN THAT CONCEALED THE ROOM'S TINY KITCHEN UNIT. SHE THOUGHT ABOUT THE NOTE...

'BE SURE THE BEARER OF THIS NOTE WINS...'

YOU'RE SWEET TO DO THIS, HELEN...



'THE BEARER WINS!' 'THE BEARER WINS!' IT KEPT POUNDING IN HELEN'S ANGRY JEALOUS BRAIN. SHE REACHED FOR THE BOTTLE OF SLEEPING PILLS. IF JOYCE OVER-SLEPT TOMORROW...

...WHY...WHY I COULD GO IN HER PLACE. AND...AND I'D GET THE BREAK I NEED.

OH, NO TROUBLE AT ALL, JOYCE!



HELEN UNSCREWED THE CAP AND EMPTIED THE REMAINING SLEEPING PILLS INTO THE POT OF WARMING MILK...

...POURED THE MILK INTO A GLASS AND BROUGHT IT TO HER ATTRACTIVE ROOMMATE...

JOYCE SIPPED THE MILK...

MR. BOXER IS THE PUBLICITY MAN FOR THE UNDER-TAKERS' AND EMBALMERS— SAY! WHAT'S IN THIS MILK?

I DISSOLVED A SLEEPING PILL IN IT, HONEY! IT'LL HELP YOU DROP OFF...

THERE WE ARE, HONEY!

THANKS, HELEN! DID I TELL YOU ABOUT MR. BOXER?



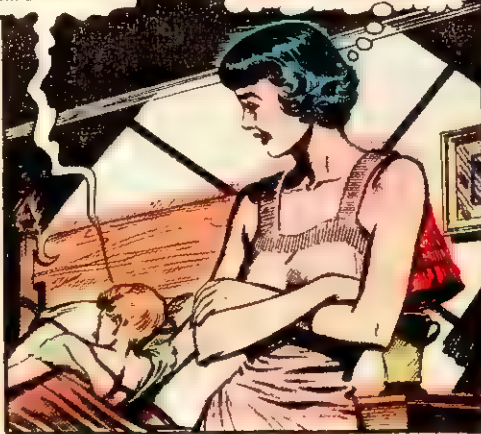
JOYCE SMILED, DRAINING THE GLASS...

OH! THANKS! ANYWAY, ALL I HAD TO DO WAS SWEET-TALK THE SLOB AND HE FELL FOR ME. HE CAN'T BE AT THE CONTEST TOMORROW, BUT... HE'LL BE... AT... THE... HO, HUM... AWARD PRESENTATION... YAWN...

TIRED, HON?

A LITTLE! ANYWAY...ONCE I'M IN, I...YAWN...GIVE HIM... THE...YAWN...BRUSH-OFF... AND...I...Z-Z-Z-Z...

AND ONCE I'M IN, BABY, I GIVE YOU THE BRUSH-OFF! SWEET DREAMS!



HELEN SLID INTO BED BESIDE PROSTRATE JOYCE, LISTENED TO HER HEAVY BREATHING, AND THOUGHT...

IT'LL BE EASY. MR. BOXER WON'T BE AT THE CONTEST IN THE MORNING SO I'LL BE SAFE. ONCE I WIN, IT'LL BE TOO LATE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT!

IN THE MORNING HELEN AROSE QUIETLY AND DRESSED HASTILY. SHE FISHED THE NOTE FROM JOYCE'S BAG AND SLIPPED OUT THE DOOR PAUSING ONLY TO SNEER AT THE SILENT FIGURE IN THE BED...

'BYE, HONEY! WHEN I COME BACK, I'LL BE 'MISS CORPSE OF 1954'!



HELEN CAUGHT A BUS UPTOWN AND WENT TO THE HOTEL WHERE THE UNDERTAKERS' AND EMBALMERS' ASSOCIATION WAS HOLDING ITS CONVENTION. AS SHE CROSSED THE LOBBY...

HEH, HEH. SO I SAYS TO THE DAME, 'SORRY, LADY! YOUR HUSBAND WAS OVER SIX FEET FOUR INCHES TALL. THAT'LL MEAN A CUSTOM-BUILT COFFIN!'

HA! AND I BET YOU SOAKED HER PLENTY!

I BEG YOUR PARDON!



PUSHED UP THE PRICE ON A STANDARD JOB TWO HUNDRED BUCKS. SHE NEVER KNEW THE DIFFERENCE! THINK A BAWLIN' WIDOW'S GONNA UP AND MEASURE A COFFIN DURING THE SERVICES? HEH, HEH! BOY, DID I HAVE TO SQUEEZE TO PUSH JASPER IN!

THAT REMINDS ME OF THE TIME I FOUND THIS GOLD BRIDGE IN ONE CUSTOMER'S MOUTH! I...

ER... COULD YOU HELP ME?



HUH? OH, SURE, LADY? WHAT'S GRIEVIN' YUH? HAH?

COULD YOU TELL ME WHERE I CAN FIND GEORGE?

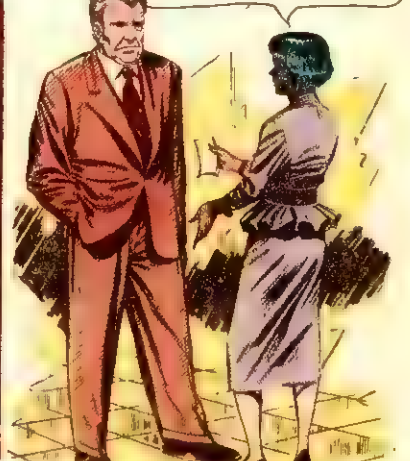
HEY, NED! THE DAME IS TRYIN' T' DIG UP GEORGE! HAW!

MR. BOXER GAVE ME THIS NOTE TO GIVE TO GEORGE, SO IF YOU'LL...

OH! SURE! SURE! HEY, GEORGE!

YES, MA'AM?

IS YOUR NAME GEORGE? MR. BOXER ASKED ME TO GIVE YOU THIS NOTE...



THE TALL, DARK MAN NAMED GEORGE READ THE NOTE THEN LOOKED HELEN OVER.

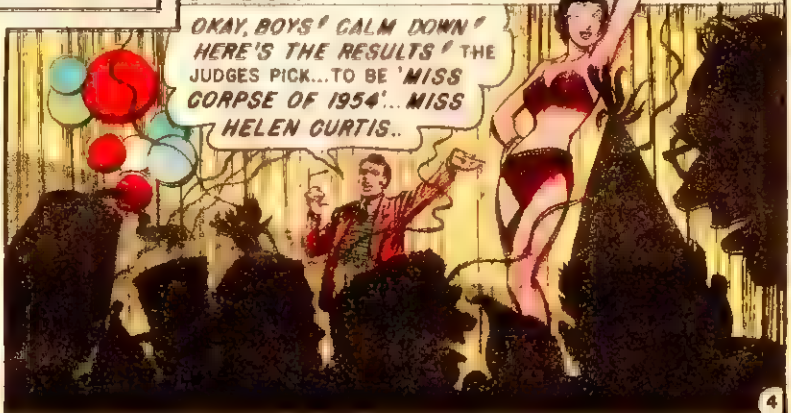
OKAY, HONEY! DON'T WORRY ABOUT A THING! JUST GET INTO YOUR SUIT. THE REST OF THE GIRLS ARE IN THERE

THANK YOU, GEORGE!



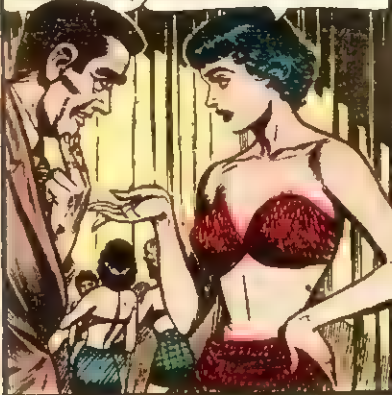
HELEN UNDRESSED AND GOT INTO HER SUIT. SHE WAITED WITH THE REST OF THE CONTESTANTS UNTIL IT WAS TIME FOR THE CONTEST. THEN, ALONG WITH THE OTHERS, SHE PARADED BEFORE THE WISERACKING UNDERTAKERS AND EMBALMERS

OKAY, BOYS! CALM DOWN! HERE'S THE RESULTS! THE JUDGES PICK...TO BE 'MISS CORPSE OF 1954'... MISS HELEN CURTIS..



HELEN SMILED, WAITING FOR FLASH-BULBS TO START GOING OFF, BUT NOTHING HAPPENED...

WHY, WHAT'S **WRONG**, MISS CURTIS? MR. BOXER SAID THERE'D BE **NEWS-PAPER COVERAGE**...



TONIGHT, MISS CURTIS! TONIGHT, AT THE **AWARD PRESENTATION!** COME TO THIS ADDRESS AT 8:00 P.M!

THANK YOU, GEORGE! I'LL BE THERE!



HELEN DRESSED AND HURRIED BACK DOWNTOWN TO HER FLAT. AS SHE BURST IN THE DOOR, TAUNTING...

WELL, HONEY! HERE I AM! 'MISS CORPSE OF 19...' CHOKE...



JOYCE NOBLE LAY CHALK-WHITE AND SILENT ON THE BED EXACTLY WHERE HELEN HAD LEFT HER THAT MORNING...

SHE...SHE'S DEAD!



HELEN BEGAN TO TREMBLE...

I...I MUST HAVE GIVEN HER **TOO MANY PILLS**. I...I **KILLED HER!**



HELEN BEGAN TO CRY. SHE THOUGHT OF GIVING HERSELF UP. SHE THOUGHT OF SPENDING THE REST OF HER LIFE BEHIND BARS. AND THEN SHE THOUGHT OF THE **AWARD PRESENTATION** THAT NIGHT...AND THE **PHOTOGRAPHERS** AND **NEWS STORIES** AND **HOLLYWOOD!** AND SHE MADE UP HER MIND...

HELLO! POLICE? I...I WANT TO REPORT A **SUICIDE!**



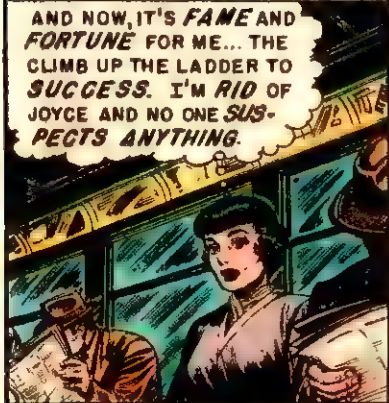
BY THE TIME THE POLICE HAD COME, HELEN HAD CLEANED HER FINGERPRINTS OFF THE **POT**, THE **GLASS**, AND THE **BOTTLE** THAT HAD CONTAINED THE **SLEEPING PILLS**. SHE SOBBED OUT HER STORY..

I WAS **ASLEEP** WHEN SHE GOT IN LAST NIGHT THIS MORNING, I **LEFT** HER THAT WAY. I...SOB...**DIDN'T EVEN KNOW**...SOB...SHE'D **DONE IT!**



THAT NIGHT, HELEN RODE THE SUBWAY UPTOWN TO THE ADDRESS GEORGE HAD GIVEN HER, GLOATING WITH SATISFACTION. THE POLICE HAD BELIEVED HER STORY...

AND NOW, IT'S *FAME AND FORTUNE* FOR ME... THE CLIMB UP THE LADDER TO *SUCCESS*. I'M *RID* OF JOYCE AND NO ONE *SUSPECTS* ANYTHING.



THE ADDRESS LED HELEN TO A DARK BROWNSTONE ON THE EAST SIDE OF TOWN. SHE RANG THE BELL HESITANTLY...

I DON'T SEE ANY CARS. I WONDER...

AH! 'MISS CORPSE OF 1954!' COME IN!



GEORGE LED HELEN DOWN DARK WINDING STEPS TO A DANK-SMELLING CELLAR...

MEMBERS OF THE UNDERTAKERS' AND EMBALMERS' ASSOCIATION. I GIVE YOU HELEN CURTIS... 'MISS CORPSE OF 1954'!



MR. BOXER WAS THERE...WITH THE OTHERS...LEERING AT HER...

WHAT HAPPENED TO MISS NOBLE, MISS CURTIS? SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO WIN!

I TOOK HER PLACE. SHE COULDN'T MAKE IT!



MR. BOXER SHOOK HIS HEAD SADLY...

A PITY, MISS CURTIS. YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED. YOU SEE...



THEY CAME AT HER WITH A RUSTLING OF RUBBER TUBES AND A WINNOWING OF SCALPES AND A SLOSHING OF EMBALMING FLUID AND A HUMMING OF PUMPS AND MOTORS...

YOU SEE, MISS CURTIS, 'MISS CORPSE OF 1954' MUST ACTUALLY BE A CORPSE.

HEE HEE!

GET 'ER, CHOKER BOYS!



HEH, HEH! AND SO WE LEAVE HELEN TO THE *MERCY* OF THE *UEA*. AS THEY *CUT* AND *SLASH* AND *DRAIN* HER *BLOOD*. NOW IT'S TIME TO TURN YOU OVER TO *THE OLD WITCH*, WHO'LL FEED YOU A *DELIRIOUS* *DESSERT* TO *WIND UP* MY *MOR-BID* *MAR*. DON'T *FORGET!* IF YOU'RE AN *E.C. FAN* AND AN *ADDICT* OF *E.C.* *MAGS*, JOIN *'THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!'* MAKE *FRIENDS!* WEAR *PINS!* FRAME *CERTIFICATES!* CARRY *CLUB CARDS!* WEAR *CLUB PATCHES!* *DROP DEAD!* 'BYE!



THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! WELL IT'S TIME FOR ME TO BREW MY GOO, AND LET ME TELL YOU RIGHT NOW THAT IT'S A REAL GOOEY BREW I'M BREWING! THIS IS THE *OLD WITCH*, MISTRESS OF THE *HAUNT OF FEAR*, READY TO SERVE YOU ANOTHER *MORBID MURSEL OF MISERY* TO SATISFY YOUR MONSTROUS APPETITES FOR *EVIL*! HERE IT IS, YOU *HORROR-HUNGRY HOUNDS*, THE STORY OF A LITTLE BOY AND HIS...

SHOE-BUTTON EYES!



GEE, WHILIKERS! THIS IS THE *BEST* CHRISTMAS I'VE EVER HAD! I CAN SEE! I CAN SEE EVERYTHING! I'M SO HAPPY!

YOU SEE, I WAS BORN **BLIND!** AND THIS IS THE **FIRST** TIME IN MY WHOLE LIFE THAT I'VE BEEN ABLE TO SEE! GOSH, EVERYTHING IS SO PRETTY! AND MY **MOMMY** IS THE **PRETTIEST** OF ALL!



"BUT I ALWAYS **KNEW** SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL EVEN THOUGH I NEVER SAW HER FACE UNTIL TODAY, 'CAUSE SHE WAS ALWAYS SO GOOD TO ME! WHEN I WAS ONLY A BABY SHE USED TO SING TO ME AND PLAY WITH ME TO MAKE ME FORGET HOW HUNGRY I WAS..."



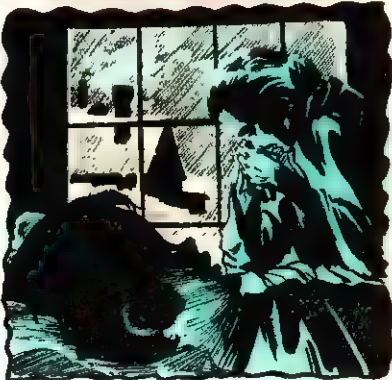
"MY DADDY WAS A GOOD MAN. HE USED TO WORK HARD AN' EVEN THOUGH HE NEVER MADE MUCH MONEY, HE AND MOMMY WERE HAPPY!"



"LIKE I SAY, HE NEVER MADE MUCH MONEY, AND WHEN THERE WASN'T ANY WOOD FOR THE STOVE, THAT'S WHEN MOMMY USED TO CRADLE ME IN HER ARMS TO KEEP ME WARM..."



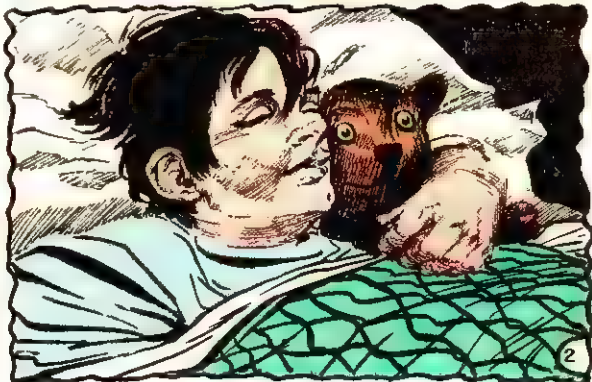
"I DON'T REMEMBER MY DADDY TOO WELL 'CAUSE HE DIED WHEN I WAS VERY SMALL. BUT I CAN REMEMBER THE SOUND OF MY MOMMY CRYING AT NIGHT AND HOW SHE USED TO TALK TO ME...LIKE I COULD UNDERSTAND..."



"IT WAS RIGHT AFTER MY DADDY DIED THAT MOMMY HAD TO START WORKING. I DIDN'T SEE HER MUCH, BUT WHEN SHE CAME HOME AT NIGHT, SHE'D SIT ME ON HER LAP AND TEACH ME THINGS, AND TALK TO ME AND KISS ME. GEE! SHE USED TO MAKE ME FEEL SO GOOD..."



"MY MOMMY TRIED TO TEACH ME EVERYTHING SHE COULD 'CAUSE I COULDN'T GO TO SCHOOL LIKE OTHER KIDS WHO **COULD** SEE! 'COURSE, SHE COULDN'T AFFORD TO SEND ME TO A **SPECIAL** SCHOOL...SO I DIDN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS AT ALL TO PLAY WITH! BUT I DIDN'T MIND... 'CAUSE I ALWAYS HAD MY **TEDDY BEAR**..."



"I DON'T REMEMBER WHERE MY TEDDY BEAR CAME FROM. SEEMS LIKE I ALWAYS HAD HIM! AND WHEN MY MOMMY WAS AWAY ALL DAY, HE USED TO KEEP ME COMPANY. I USED TO TALK TO HIM ALL THE TIME. TEDDY BEAR WAS THE **ONLY FRIEND I EVER HAD...**"



"AND THEN MY MOMMY GOT MARRIED AGAIN. I DIDN'T LIKE MY NEW DADDY AS MUCH AS MY **REAL DADDY...** AND I DON'T THINK MY MOMMY LIKED HIM, EITHER. SHE NEVER SAID SO RIGHT OUT, BUT I THINK SHE ONLY MARRIED HIM FOR MY SAKE..."



"MY MOMMY AND TEDDY BEAR NEVER LAUGHED AT ME 'CAUSE I COULDN'T SEE WHERE I WAS GOING. WHY DID MY NEW DADDY LAUGH AT ME?"

"AFTER MY NEW DADDY CAME TO LIVE WITH US, I HAD TO SLEEP ALONE. BUT I HAD TEDDY BEAR TO TALK TO. HE WAS ALWAYS MY FRIEND..."

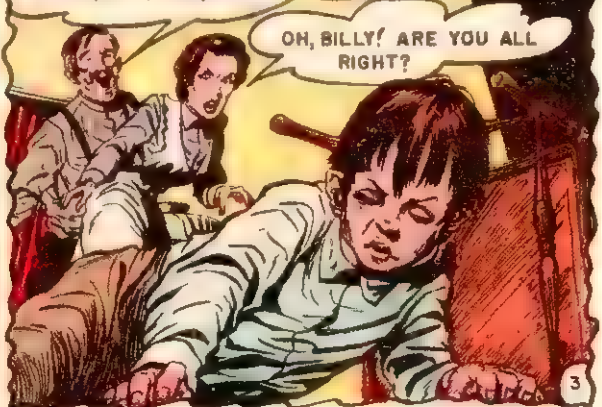
"MY MOMMY AND I WERE AFRAID OF MY NEW DADDY. HE WAS MEAN TO US... AND HE USED TO MAKE MY MOMMY CRY..."



"SEEMS LIKE MY MOMMY WAS **ALWAYS** UNHAPPY. SOMETIMES MY NEW DADDY WOULDN'T COME HOME ALL NIGHT, AND TEDDY BEAR AND I WOULD LIE AWAKE, LISTENING TO MY MOMMY CRYING IN HER SLEEP AND WHEN HE **DID** COME HOME... HE WAS ALMOST ALWAYS **DRUNK...**"

"HE DIDN'T LIKE ME. HE USED TO ALWAYS MAKE FUN OF ME AND LAUGH AT ME 'CAUSE I WAS **BLIND!**"

HA, HA! THAT'S THE SECOND TIME YOU TRIPPED OVER THAT CHAIR! WHY DON'T YOU LOOK WHERE YOU'RE GOING, BOY? **HA, HA!**



"LOTS OF TIMES MY NEW DADDY WOULDN'T GIVE MY MOMMY ANY MONEY. AND THAT'S WHEN MY MOMMY HAD TO START WORKING AGAIN. BUT SHE HAD TO WORK TOO HARD... AND I KNEW IT WAS TOO MUCH FOR HER. SHE GOT SICK..."

MOMMY... YOU DON'T SOUND GOOD! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? ARE YOU?

(COUGH) OF COURSE I'M ALL RIGHT, BILLY! I'M FEELING JUST FINE... (COUGH)



WILL YA LOOK AT THAT! BOY, YOU GOT THE FUNNIEST LOOKING EYES I EVER SAW! WHY, HANGED IF THEY DON'T LOOK JUST LIKE YOUR TEDDY BEAR'S *SHOE-BUTTON EYES*! HA! WELL, IF *THAT* DON'T BEAT ALL!

SNIFF!



"I COULDN'T HELP IT IF I HAD FUNNY LOOKING EYES, COULD I? IT WASN'T MY FAULT, WAS IT? IT WASN'T MY FAULT..."

GEE, TEDDY BEAR... YOU AND MOMMY ARE THE ONLY FRIENDS I HAVE. I... I WISH I COULD SEE! THEN... (SNIFF) THEN MAYBE HE WOULDN'T MAKE FUN OF ME...



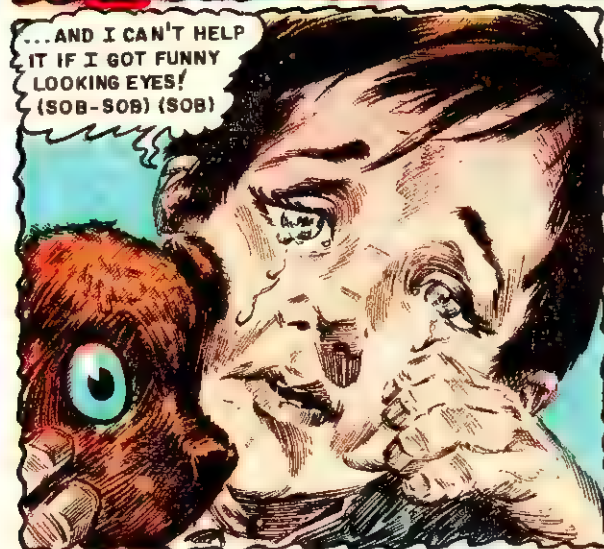
AND... AND I WISH I WAS *BIG*! THEN I COULD TAKE CARE OF MY MOMMY. I DON'T LIKE TO HEAR HER CRY SO MUCH! SHE NEVER USED TO CRY WHEN MY *REAL* DADDY WAS HERE!



...IT ISN'T RIGHT, IS IT, TEDDY BEAR? IT ISN'T RIGHT THAT SOMEONE GOOD LIKE MY MOMMY SHOULD ALWAYS CRY! (SNIFF) AND... AND...



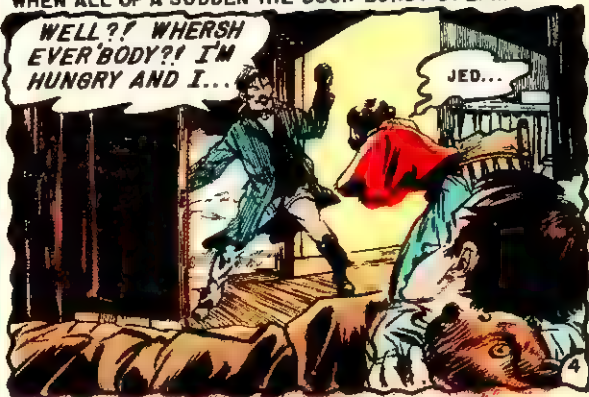
...AND I CAN'T HELP IT IF I GOT FUNNY LOOKING EYES! (SOB-SOB) (SOB)

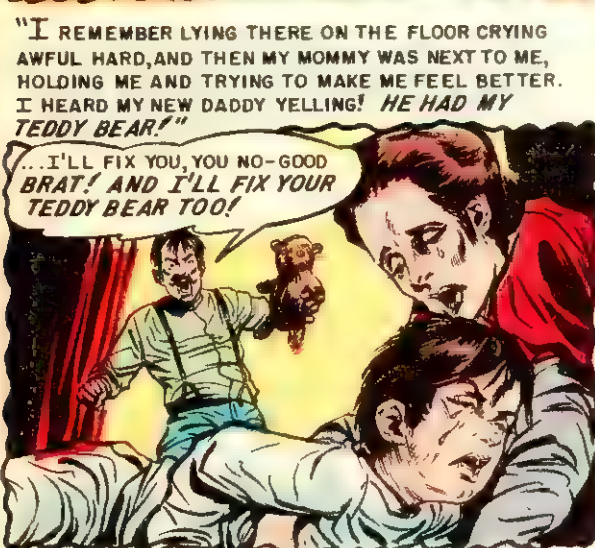


"I REMEMBER ONE NIGHT WHEN IT WAS ALMOST CHRISTMAS. MY MOMMY WAS REAL SICK AND MY NEW DADDY HADN'T BEEN HOME FOR A FEW DAYS, SO THERE WASN'T ANY MONEY IN THE HOUSE. MY MOMMY WAS AWFUL SICK. I WAS IN BED WITH TEDDY BEAR TRYING TO KEEP WARM, WHEN ALL OF A SUDDEN THE DOOR BURST OPEN..."

WELL?! WHERSH EVER'BODY?! I'M HUNGRY AND I...

JED...

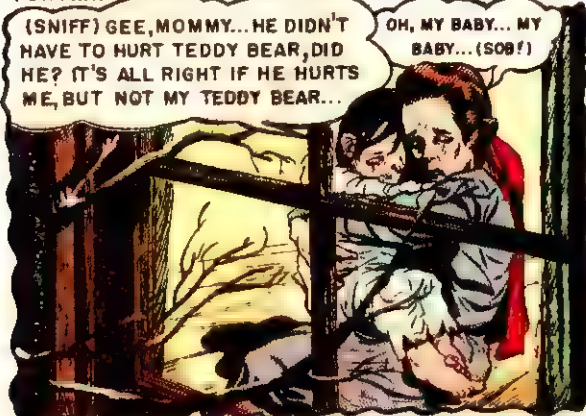




"I HEARD MY NEW DADDY SLAM THE DOOR AS HE WENT AWAY... AND THEN IT WAS QUIET. MY MOMMY JUST HELD ME IN HER ARMS THERE ON THE FLOOR, AND FOR A LONG TIME SHE JUST CRIED AND KINDA ROCKED BACK AND FORTH..."

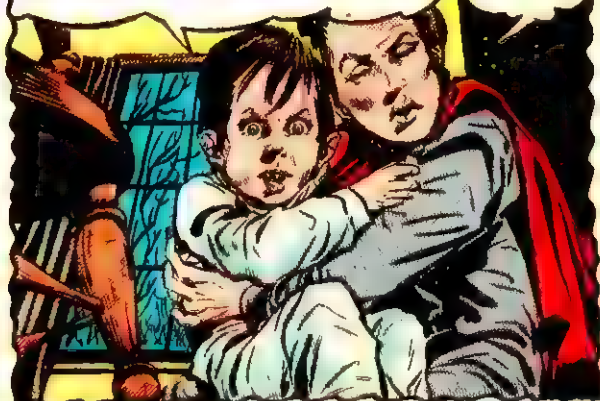
(SNIFF) GEE, MOMMY... HE DIDN'T HAVE TO HURT TEDDY BEAR, DID HE? IT'S ALL RIGHT IF HE HURTS ME, BUT NOT MY TEDDY BEAR...

OH, MY BABY... MY BABY... (SOB!)



I WISH TEDDY BEAR HAD HIS EYES BACK, MOMMY! TEDDY BEAR *NEEDS* HIS EYES! I'M... I'M USED TO NOT HAVING EYES, MOMMY! DO YOU THINK... MOMMY! DO YOU THINK MAYBE SANTA CLAUS...?

I DON'T KNOW, SON! I DON'T KNOW... (COUGH!)



SANTA CLAUS NEVER BROUGHT ME ANYTHING *BEFORE*, MOMMY! DO YOU THINK MAYBE JUST THIS *ONCE* HE'D GIVE TEDDY BEAR BACK HIS EYES? *JUST THIS ONCE, MOMMY?*

(SOB)
(SOB)



"I DIDN'T KNOW THIS AT THE TIME, BUT THE NEXT DAY, MY MOMMY TOOK THE MONEY SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO BUY MEDICINE WITH AND WENT OUT..."



"IT WAS AN AWFUL COLD DAY! I HAD TO STAY IN BED WITH MY CLOTHES ON TO KEEP WARM, AND MY MOMMY, SHE SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE OUT IN THAT WEATHER. SHE WAS *REAL SICK*..."

I'LL... (COUGH) I'LL TAKE THIS PAIR, PLEASE! (COUGH)



I HEARD HER COME BACK, AND AFTER WE TALKED FOR A LITTLE WHILE SHE MADE ME GET BACK IN BED SO I WOULDN'T CATCH COLD. I LISTENED TO HER MOVING AROUND THE KITCHEN. SHE WAS BREATHING KINDA FUNNY AND IT SEEMS SHE WAS COUGHING AN AWFUL LOT! I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE WAS DOING, THOUGH."



"I GUESS I FELL ASLEEP! I DON'T KNOW JUST WHEN IT WAS, BUT I FELT SANTA CLAUS LIFT MY ARM AND PUT MY TEDDY BEAR BESIDE ME. I WAS HALF ASLEEP BUT I REMEMBER TOUCHING HIS FACE AND FEELING HIS *EYES*. AND I KNEW THEY WERE *BRIGHT AND REAL PRETTY*..."



"THE NEXT THING I KNEW, I HEARD MY NEW DADDY YELLING. I GOT OUT OF BED. HE WAS YELLING AT MY MOMMY TO GET OUT OF BED... BUT SHE DIDN'T MOVE...SHE DIDN'T MOVE AT ALL..."

"I LISTENED FOR MY MOMMY...AND I KNEW SHE WASN'T GOING TO GET UP. I KNEW SHE WASN'T *EVER* GOING TO GET UP AGAIN..."

(SNIFF) MOMMY... MOMMY, PLEASE WAKE UP... (SNIFF)

SHOE-BUTTON EYES!

GET UP, I SAY! GET UP!

...NO GOOD TRAMP! GET OUTTA THAT BED. YOU HEAR?!



"I DON'T KNOW WHY HE HIT ME. I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING! I REMEMBER HITTING MY HEAD AGAINST SOMETHING SHARP...AND THAT'S ALL..."



"BUT BEFORE CHRISTMAS MORNING, THERE WERE SOME AWFUL SCREAMS AND YELLS THAT CAME FROM OUR HOUSE. THE NOISE WOKE THE WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD..."

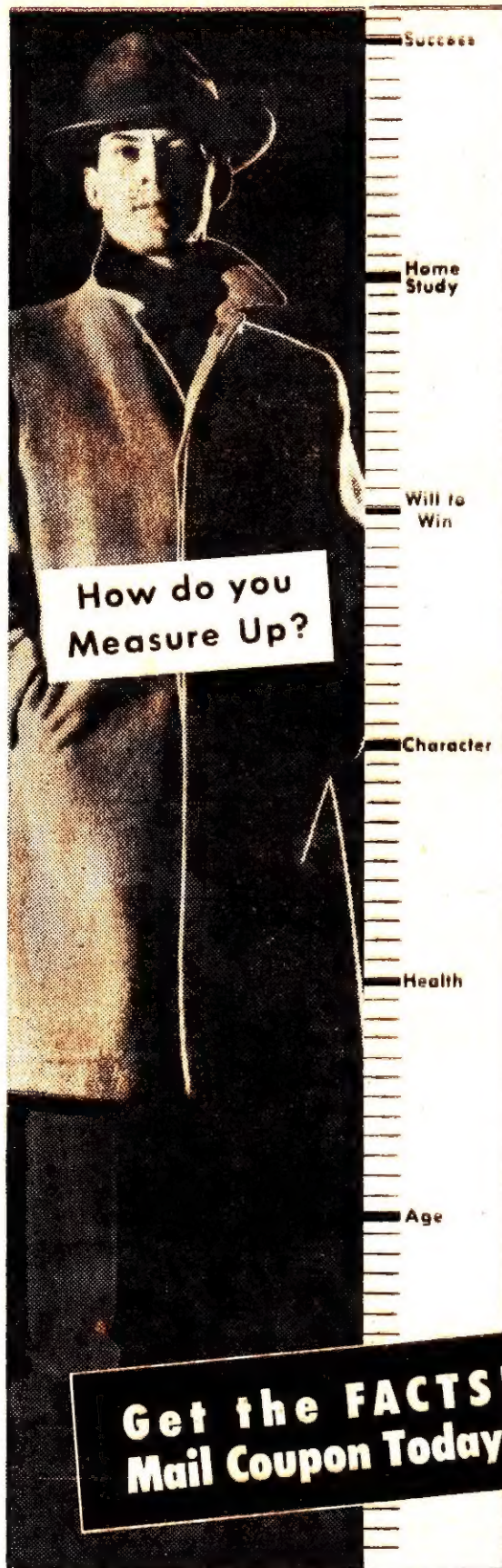


"...AND WHEN THEY BROKE THE DOOR DOWN, THEY SAW MY NEW DADDY LYING ON THE FLOOR. HE WAS DEAD AND HE WAS ALL RIPPED AND BLOODY LIKE SOME ANIMAL HAD GOT HIM. HIS EYES WERE TORN OUT... AND IN THEIR PLACE WERE THE NEW SHOE BUTTON EYES... ALL BRIGHT AND SHINY. THEY FOUND MY TEDDY BEAR IN A CORNER...WITHOUT HIS EYES, ALL COVERED WITH BLOOD...AND...AND HE WAS SMILING..."

AND THAT'S WHY THIS IS THE BEST CHRISTMAS I'VE *EVER* HAD! I CAN SEE! I CAN SEE EVERYTHING FROM WAY UP HERE! AND EVERYTHING'S SO PRETTY!

IF ANY OF YOU FOUL FIENDS THINK I'M GETTING *MUSHY* IN MY OLD AGE, YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO GRIN AND *BEAR* IT (TEDDY, THAT IS!), 'CAUSE I'M ALL CHOKED UP WITH THE YULETIDE SPIRIT! SO UNTIL NEXT TIME...*MERRY XMAS!*





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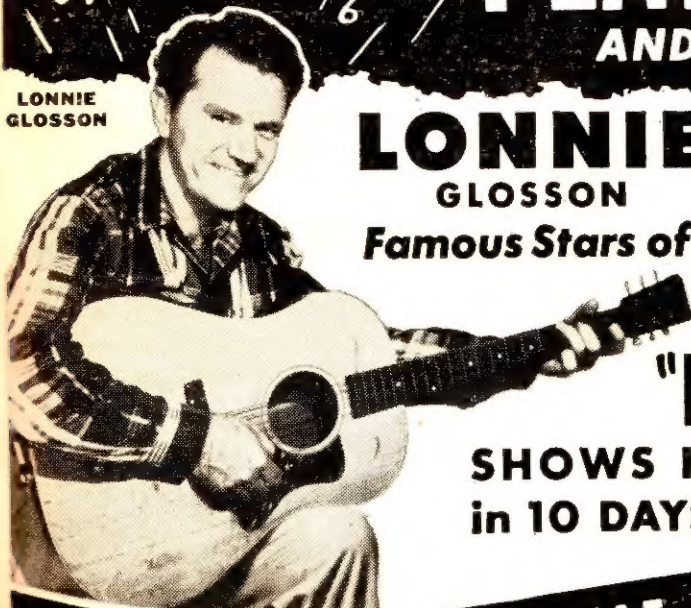
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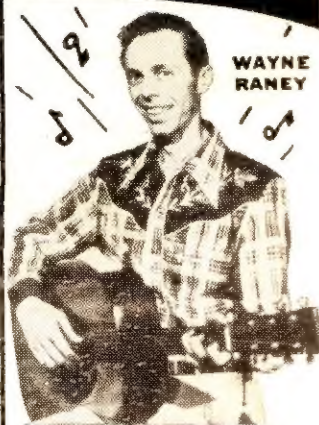
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